

# Supplementary Resource for EL Identification and Assessment

In Response to the COVID Pandemic

## Introduction

Below are recommendations to ensure the timely identification and assessment of English learners (ELs) when these processes have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The recommendations relate to the use of the Home Language Survey to identify potential ELs, supplementary measures to verify WIDA Remote Screener results, options when a student was unable to participate in ACCESS for ELLs testing, and ensuring timely parent notification.

Federal law<sup>1</sup> requires districts to properly identify ELs within 30 days of enrollment. If this was not possible to do because of limited access to the student, districts must do so as soon as feasible. In addition, English Language Proficiency (ELP) assessment data is used to drive decisions regarding programs of service and support needs of ELs. ELs who have missing ELP assessment data due to COVID-19 related disruptions may be in need of supplemental ELP assessment to support their return to the classroom and to assess the extent of the disruption to their learning.

## EL Identification

The standard EL identification process is described in the EL Policy Handbook<sup>2</sup>. If a student did not progress all the way through the standard EL Identification process, districts will need to resume the standard process as soon as is feasible.

## Home Language Survey and Initial Screening

If a Home Language Survey (HLS) was not administered, then one should be administered first to determine whether the student is a potential EL. If an HLS was administered and indicated that the student was a potential EL, but the student did not take a screener, in most cases the student should take the WIDA Screener. If the student did not take a screener but did take the ACCESS for ELLs, the ACCESS results can be used in place of the ELP Screener score to determine EL status and qualifying ELP score.

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<sup>1</sup> [20 U.S.C. § 6823\(b\)\(2\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://dpi.wi.gov/english-learners/el-identification-and-placement>

## Students Administered the WIDA Remote Screener

WIDA recommends districts using the WIDA Remote Screener follow up with supplemental ELP Screening when feasible. This may not be necessary in all situations, however. Students determined to be English proficient may not need additional formal ELP assessment, and students who took the 2020-21 ACCESS for ELLs can have that count as the supplemental ELP screening.

## Students Identified as English Proficient

For students administered the WIDA Remote Screener and deemed English proficient, districts should create a process to monitor their academic performance and use of English in the classroom. This may involve existing multi-level systems of supports (MLSS), or repurposing their process for the two-year monitoring of recently reclassified ELs.

An English proficient student will frequently display the following characteristics in English in the classroom:

- Initiates, engages in and/or sustains academic conversations with little or no prompting or structured support.
- Uses language spontaneously, flexibly, and effectively for academic purposes, without searching for English words, phrases and sentences before responding.
- Understands most main ideas and supporting details presented in speech on familiar and academic topics from people or diverse media sources.
- Navigates extended speech even when not clearly structured, (e.g., the student asks clarifying questions when the message is unclear).
- Presents organized, detailed writing on most topics using both simple and complex sentences and a variety of text structures that are appropriate for the student's grade level.
- Demonstrates in writing the right words for the right purpose using a variety of general and academic vocabulary appropriate for the content and grade level.
- Comprehends content area text without needing excessive support beyond what is typical for native English-speaking peers.
- Understands text with figurative language, slang, multiple meaning, and complex nuanced language, (e.g., gigantic, humongous, enormous - which is the biggest?).
- Shows understanding of academic vocabulary and is able to derive meaning of academic vocabulary from context.
- Follows oral and written instructions with grade-level appropriate clarification when needed.

If a student who was determined to be English proficient based on the WIDA Remote Screener does not demonstrate such a level of proficiency, administer the WIDA Screener to confirm whether the student is an EL as soon as is feasible.

## Students Identified as ELs

Some students were identified as ELs based on the results of the WIDA Remote Screener. As WIDA's guidance is to use a supplemental ELP assessment score to determine EL status, meeting the obligation to appropriately identify ELs will depend on whether the student received this supplemental assessment.

### Students who took the ACCESS for ELLs in 2020-21

Students identified as ELs on the WIDA Remote Screener who took the 2020-21 ACCESS for ELLs will have that count as the supplemental ELP assessment.

For students with an Overall Composite ELP under 4.5, districts should treat this as the qualifying score for EL status, and report the truncated value as the student's ELP code.

For students scoring 4.5-4.9, districts may choose to administer the Multiple Indicator Protocol (MIP) and use that to make a determination if the student is fluent and can exit, or they may choose not to administer the MIP and the student will retain their EL status.

For students scoring 5.0 and above, districts may determine if this student is an EL who has legitimately attained proficiency, or if this student was misidentified as an EL. If evidence exists that the student was not ever an EL, the student may be assigned ELP 7, never-EL. If evidence exists that the student most likely was an EL, the student should receive ELP 6 - Former EL.

### Students who did not take the ACCESS for ELLs in 2020-21

Students identified as ELs on the WIDA Remote Screener who did not take the 2020-21 ACCESS for ELLs will need a secondary measure of their ELP to confirm their EL status. The WIDA Screener should be administered to students as soon as is feasible, whether in the spring, summer, or fall. The score from the WIDA Screener will be the qualifying score for an EL determination and will be the basis for the student's ELP code reported to DPI.

## ELs who missed the 2020-21 ACCESS for ELLs

Existing ELs (not those newly identified in 2020-21) who missed the 2020-21 ACCESS for ELLs will need some assessment of their language proficiency upon which to base instruction and student learning objectives for the 2020-21 school year. This assessment can take many forms, and should be tailored to the needs of the district, ESL staff, and students. Options include but are not limited to:

- The WIDA Screener
- ESL/Content Teacher co-graded district assessments
- Use of the WIDA Scoring Rubrics for Speaking and Writing to assess early fall coursework
- Existing formative or benchmark ELP assessments in use in the district

ELs who missed the 2020-21 ACCESS for ELLs will not be eligible to be reclassified. A qualifying ACCESS for ELLs score is required in order to reclassify a student as fully English proficient, Former EL.

## Parental Notification Requirements

Districts have 30 days from the start of the school year to notify parents of ELs enrolled prior to or at the start of the school year<sup>3</sup>. For students enrolling mid-year, districts have two weeks to notify parents once they have made an EL determination<sup>4</sup>. (Please note that the timeline for *identification* is 30 days from enrollment, regardless of what time of year a student enrolls.)

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented a variety of challenges around the identification and assessment of ELs. Districts may need to make special effort to ensure timely and accurate information is provided to parents related to identification, assessment, and programming for their children. LEAs must inform parents of:

- the reasons for the identification of their child as an English learner and in need of placement in a language instruction educational program;
- the child's level of English proficiency, how such level was assessed, and the status of the child's academic achievement;
- the methods of instruction used in the program in which their child is, or will be, participating and the methods of instruction used in other available programs, including how such programs differ in content, instructional goals, and the use of English and a native language in instruction;
- how the program in which their child is, or will be, participating will meet the educational strengths and needs of their child;
- how such program will specifically help their child learn English and meet age-appropriate academic achievement standards for grade promotion and graduation;
- the specific exit requirements for the program, including the expected rate of transition from such program into classrooms that are not tailored for English learners, and the expected rate of graduation from high school (including four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates and extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rates for such program) if funds under this part are used for children in high schools;
- in the case of a child with a disability, how such program meets the objectives of the individualized education program of the child, as described in section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1414(d)); and
- information pertaining to parental rights that includes written guidance:

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<sup>3</sup> [20 U.S.C. § 6312 \(e\) \(3\) \(A\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [20 U.S.C. § 6312 \(e\) \(3\) \(B\)](#)

- detailing the right that parents have to have their child immediately removed from such program upon their request;
- detailing the options that parents have to decline to enroll their child in such program or to choose another program or method of instruction, if available; and
- assisting parents in selecting among various programs and methods of instruction, if more than one program or method is offered by the eligible entity.